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The latest “criticism” of the Gothenburg system

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THE LATEST "CRITICISM" OF THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM.

Allegations *versus* Facts.

BY

ARTHUR SHERWELL, M.P.

THE TEMPERANCE LEGISLATION LEAGUE,
PARLIAMENT MANSIONS, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.

October, 1912.

The Temperance Legislation League,

PARLIAMENT MANSIONS. VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.

Object—To promote Temperance Reform by Legislation and the effective administration of the Licensing Laws.

President—THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT PEEL.

Chairman of Committee—JOSEPH ROWNTREE, Esq.

Vice-Chairman of Committee—The Rev. Canon HORSLEY, M.A.

Hon. Secs. { ARTHUR SHERWELL. Esq., M.P. (Literature). J. M. HOGGE. Esq., M.P. (Organisation).

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PARLIAMENT MANSIONS,
ORCHARD STREET,
VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.

5th October, 1912.

SIR,

May I ask your careful consideration of the enclosed pamphlet, entitled, **"THE LATEST 'CRITICISM' OF THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM,"** being a reply by **Mr. ARTHUR SHERWELL, M.P.,** to an attack on the proposal of **DISINTERESTED MANAGEMENT by Mr. CHARLES SMITH, F.S.S.,** recently issued.

Yours faithfully,

A. F. HARVEY,
Secretary.

Mn. 22, 1916. B.B.

THE LATEST "CRITICISM" OF THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM.

Allegations *versus* Facts.

We have had forwarded to us a copy of *The British Temperance Advocate*—the official journal of the British Temperance League—for September, which contains a long attack—extending to five columns—on "Disinterested Management." The article is written by Mr. Charles Smith, the secretary and editor of the League, and purports to be an "examination" of the system of disinterested management as examplified in Sweden.

Intrinsically the article can hardly be said to call for extended treatment. It is not an original contribution to the criticism of the Gothenburg system. It covers familiar and well-trodden ground, and adds nothing to our knowledge.

Nevertheless, it is so instructive as an illustration of the extraordinarily imperfect knowledge upon which sweeping denunciations of the Gothenburg system are customarily made in certain quarters, and is so valuable for the opportunity it affords us of elucidating important facts which have not been involved in other criticisms lately submitted to us, that we propose, in response to several requests, to give it detailed attention.

The writer of the article sets out to establish two propositions: (1) that the Swedish system of disinterested management is "a very drunken system" (meaning, presumably, not that the system itself is 'drunken,' but that it produces drunkenness); and (2) that it is "a corrupting system."

The Statistical Test of Drunkenness.

The first proposition he attempts to justify by the very simple, but very dangerous, method of comparing statistics of drunkenness for certain Swedish towns (Gothenburg and Stockholm) and certain English towns. The simplicity of the test is unquestionable. So also is the method of applying it. The writer does not concern himself for a moment with real differences in the statutes of the two countries concerning prosecutions for drunkenness; he conveniently assumes complete similarity in police procedure and practice. He makes no analysis of the statistics quoted, nor so much as hints that something like 30 per cent.—nearly one-third—of the persons annually convicted for drunkenness in Gothenburg and Stockholm are non-residents (*i.e.*, persons living in surrounding prohibition areas); he just flings unanalysed, and—as every responsible criminologist holds—incomparable, figures into violent juxtaposition, and says: 'There! see what a very drunken system the Gothenburg system is!'

It is all delightfully simple. Is the writer sure that it is wise? Suppose that those who support disinterested management accept the statistical test; will he himself accept it? Is he prepared (as, if the test be valid and legitimate, he must be prepared) to apply the same test all round? There are, on the continent, several countries where what is virtually free sale in liquor obtains, where the consumption of liquor is much higher than in Great Britain, but where the convictions for drunkenness are very much lower. Does he therefore suggest that the British system of licence regulation is "a very drunken system," and inferior to free trade in drink? Scotland has, in some important respects, more stringent licensing regulations than England; the consumption of liquors is also smaller. On the other hand, the convictions for drunkenness and offences primarily

connected with drunkenness are considerably higher. Is the licence system in Scotland, therefore, a more 'drunken' system than the English system?

The Test as Applied to Prohibition.

We can take more striking illustrations still. In the United States of America, prohibition, either by State, county, or local, enactment, prevails in many small towns. The convictions for drunkenness in a large number of those towns are much higher than in corresponding English towns; is prohibition therefore "a very drunken system"? Let us take Portland, the chief city in the prohibition State of Maine, where, as we can testify from personal experience, the police are slow to exercise their powers of arrest in cases of simple drunkenness. During the last twenty years, the arrests for drunkenness in Portland have ranged from 35 per 1,000 up to 70 per 1,000. In 1910, they were 57 per 1,000, and last year they actually rose to 70 per 1,000 inhabitants—figures that are much higher than the arrests or prosecutions for the same offence in either Gothenburg or Stockholm, and enormously higher than the figures for the English towns quoted by Mr. Smith. Are we therefore to conclude that prohibition is "a very drunken system"? If the charge is truly levelled against the Gothenburg system, it must apply with equal truth and even greater force to prohibition in Maine.

The Case of Stavanger.

Or, to show by a final illustration the extreme folly of statistical arguments of this kind, let us take the case of Stavanger in Norway. It is not a large town (population 37,000), but it happens to be the largest town in Norway that has abolished the Samlag system of disinterested management in favour of (nominal) prohibition of spirits. In the five years preceding the abolition of disinterested management, the arrests for drunkenness in Stavanger averaged 13·2 per 1,000 inhabitants. In the succeeding five years (*i.e.*, under prohibition) the arrests for drunkenness more than doubled, averaging 31·8 per 1,000, while in the following five years (still under prohibition) there was a further increase to an average of 33·6 per 1,000 inhabitants. During the last three years (1909-11) they have risen to 44 per 1,000 inhabitants, *i.e.*, more than *four times* the average ratio of convictions quoted by Mr. Smith for Manchester, more than *eight times* the average ratio quoted for Birmingham, and more than *eleven times* the average ratio quoted for Leeds and Sheffield.

Do these figures, we ask Mr. Smith, prove that prohibition in Stavanger is "a very drunken system"?

The Statements of Drunken Persons.

Mr. Smith, however, seeks to fortify his suggestion by quoting certain aggregate figures, purporting to show where the last drink purchased by the persons arrested in Gothenburg was obtained. He tells his readers that "In Gothenburg the magistrates are required, in cases of drunkenness, to ascertain at which place the drunken person drank last, and the results of this investigation are reported." He quotes the figures as representing, in his own words, "cases established by legal investigation."

Mr. Smith is evidently completely misinformed on this point. In the first place, the magistrates in Gothenburg are *not* required to make any such inquiry and, as a matter of fact, have nothing whatever to do with it. The inquiry is made by the police, and the figures, so far from representing facts "established by legal investigation," represent merely the unverified statements of the drunken persons themselves. Further, the police have never accepted the figures as trustworthy. On the contrary, in report after report, and statement after statement, they have pointed out their untrustworthiness. Finally, the inquiry, so far from being in any sense "legal," did not even originate with the police. It was instituted, in 1875, in direct response to the request of the Gothenburg Company itself, who wished for the information as a possible check upon any mis-management of their houses! The idea underlying the request was that if the statistics pointed to a particular public-house, the directors, through their inspectors, could set a special watch upon that house.

An Ingenious Method of Argument.

If, however, appeal is to be made to the figures—and supporters of the Gothenburg system certainly have no reason to object to such appeal—it must be made in legitimate ways.

It cannot be made in Mr. Smith's way. Mr. Smith takes a summarised block of figures—representing some 21,000 cases—and flings it at his readers without the least hint of the date of the figures, or of the number of years which they cover, and, apparently, without any suspicion of pitfalls in the headings chosen for the classification. What, for example, to take his first group, does he mean by "Company's public-houses"? Does he suggest that the whole of the 4,867 cases assigned to these refer solely to the few 'on' places conducted by the Company itself? This is an important point on which it is desirable to have an explicit answer.

Mr. Smith takes another group of 5,523 cases—or about 26 per cent. of the total number—where the 'last drink' is alleged to have been obtained 'at home or from retail bottle sale,' and another group of 5,676 cases, or 27 per cent. of the whole, where the place where the last drink was obtained was "not ascertained," and proceeds as follows:—"The retail bottle sale is from the Company's shops, and half of the drunks in that class may fairly be debited to the system, and the same proportion of the class where the last place of drinking was 'not ascertained'"; and, acting on these delightfully convenient assumptions, he straightway constructs another table to prove that 10,466 "drunkards" came "from the 'disinterestedly managed liquor shops.'"

The Method Analysed.

We are loath to dissect so plausible and so very ingenious a method of argument, but we are afraid we must. In the first place, on what authority, or on what evidence, does Mr. Smith allege that "the retail bottle sale is from the Company's shops"? The Gothenburg Company, as a matter of fact, has seven, and only seven, retail (*i.e.*, 'off') licensed spirit shops under its management, or one for every 23,600 resident inhabitants. In addition to the Company's shops, however, there are 22 other retail ('off') licensed spirit shops in Gothenburg conducted by wine and spirit merchants. These Mr. Smith does not so much as mention! "The retail bottle sale," he tells his readers, "is from the Company's shops." Therefore, "half of the drunks in that class may fairly," in his view, "be debited to the [Gothenburg] system." It happens, however, that in taking his "half" of "that class," he annexes at the same time half of the cases where the "last drink" was said to have been obtained "at home," although there is nothing to show that those cases had any connection whatever with the Company's spirit shops, or even that the drunkenness was caused by spirits at all! After procedure of this sort, it is not matter for wonder that Mr. Smith should proceed to lay equally eager hands upon the 5,676 cases—more than a fourth of the whole—where the last place of drinking was "not ascertained" and straightway, without evidence, argument or reason, debit half of them to the Gothenburg system!

Some Strange Omissions.

If Mr. Smith was really anxious to present the case fairly, why did he summarise the figures? Would it not have been fairer, both to the system he criticises and to his readers, to give the figures (as he easily might have done) for separate years, or for successive quinquennial periods, and so make plain the very important fact (carefully hidden in his summary) that whereas the proportion of cases where the 'last drink' is alleged to have been purchased at the Company's bars has substantially declined (*i.e.*, by more than one-half in a period of twenty years), the proportion of cases where the 'last drink' is alleged to have been purchased at beer saloons (which are not under the Gothenburg system) has in the same period nearly trebled! Surely that is a material fact? And yet Mr. Smith does not so much as hint at it. Further, why, in dealing with the question of drunkenness in Gothenburg, does he give his readers no figures to guide them to a true appreciation of the position in Gothenburg? Is it a small fact, or a negligible fact, that, while the Gothenburg Company has under its management some 26 licences altogether, (*i.e.*, 19 'on' spirit licences* and 7 'off' spirit licences), there are 40 other spirit licences (*i.e.*, 18 'on' and 22 'off'), and some *600 beer shops* outside its management and control? Surely facts of this importance deserved at least to be mentioned in a so-called "examination" which professes to distribute the responsibility for a town's drunkenness.

Official Evidence Ignored.

We desire to call attention to another important point. Although Mr. Smith labours, through more than two columns of print, to prove, by statistics, his allegation that the Gothenburg system is "a very drunken system," and, incidentally, lays much ingenious and manipulative stress upon the casual statements of drunken persons in Gothenburg, he does not give a hint of the official and other inquiries into the causes of drunkenness in that city, nor of the opinions expressed by local temperance and other societies. Why? Is Mr. Smith ignorant of these inquiries and reports? Does he not know, for example, of the independent inquiry instituted by a committee of a Gothenburg working men's association in 1891, and the emphasis laid by that committee upon the increased consumption of beer (which is outside the Gothenburg system) as a 'chief' cause of the city's drunkenness? Is he also ignorant of the investigation made by a committee of the Gothenburg Town Council in 1899–1900, and of the explicit and repeated

* Not one of these 'on' places is an ordinary dram shop, in the English sense. Everyone who purchases 'brannvin' in them is compelled at the same time to purchase food of a stipulated value. Moreover, he is restricted to a maximum limit of two drams.

emphasis laid by that Committee in their report upon the prominent part which beer plays in the production of drunkenness in Gothenburg? Does he not know—to quote one of many references—that the Committee state that, among the causes assigned, "the most generally given is the increasing consumption of beer, which cause is given by almost all the temperance societies and some other associations"; and that "as contributing causes to the increased consumption of beer and the drunkenness and other breaches of order often caused thereby," are set forth (by the same Societies):—

(*a*). The great number of places for the sale of beer, especially those for the 'off' sale of beer.

(*b*). Want of control over, and legal regulation of, the 'off' sale of beer.

(*c*). Consumption of beer by minors.*

(*d*). The too great number of beer 'on' places of sale.

(*e*). The misuse of their licences by the keepers of beer restaurants "to such an extent that in many cases the sale of beer becomes the principal, and the sale of food the secondary, business," and also "the want of control over these licences."

(*f*). The want of control over the 'on' sales of beer "as well as the omission to investigate the illegal sale of beer."

(*g*). Sales on Sundays and holidays, and

(*h*). Dark and unhealthy premises.

Is he also unaware that, in the same report, the Town Council Committee say, "The fact is that while brannvin and spirituous liquors on a par with it become dearer and dearer, and more difficult to obtain through taxation and stern restrictive measures, beer has up till now been left free from special taxation, and its sale by retail has been subject to relatively small restrictions, while the 'off' beer trade has been left practically free?"

Views of Local Clergy and Temperance Workers.

Is it not also a fact that, in 1898, the Bishop and Dean of Gothenburg, together with thirty clergymen in active service in and around the town, "concerned with the evil consequences caused by the beer-houses," petitioned the Governor of the province that various restrictions, such as the disinterested management company had applied to the sale of spirits, might be applied to the sale of beer? Did they not also, in the same petition, recommend that the sale of beer should come under the control of the Gothenburg disinterested management company, and be "conducted according to the Gothenburg system?" Is such a request, from such petitioners, the proof of "a very drunken system?" Was it also because the Gothenburg system is "a very drunken system" that, in 1902, a national conference of temperance societies, convened by the Swedish Temperance Society, likewise recommended that the sale of malt liquors should be placed under the control of the system? If it be indeed a fact that the Gothenburg system is, as Mr. Smith alleges, "a very drunken system," how came the *Alliance News*—the official organ of the United Kingdom Alliance—to declare in a leading article on July 13th, 1894, that "We think that if the whole of the liquor trade in the towns of Sweden and Norway, instead of only the trade in spirits, had been placed under 'the system,' the effect on the sobriety of the people would have been much more marked than, under the present restricted application of the principle, has been the case?"

The Statistics of Drink Consumption.

There is still another point—a matter which goes to the root of the question—which Mr. Smith has, strangely enough, entirely ignored. Drunkenness, every one agrees, is due to the excessive consumption of alcoholic liquors. Responsibility for it—even where the liquor is consumed at home—must, in Mr. Smith's view, be fastened upon the sellers of liquor. But it never seems to have occurred to him that, if this be so, the responsibility must be distributed with some sort of regard—however rough and ready—*to the statistics of sales*. In arbitrarily fastening so large a share of responsibility for high statistics of drunkenness upon the Gothenburg Company, he never so much as refers—for confirmation or disproof—to the statistics of the Company's sales. Surely that is a strange omission in a professed "Examination" of the causes of drunkenness!

Let us see what colour the actual statistics of sales give to Mr. Smith's arbitrary allegations. It happens that, during the last thirty years, statistical drunkenness has increased in Gothenburg. The figures quoted by Mr. Smith reflect this increase. If the Gothenburg system of disinterested management is really so largely responsible for drunkenness as Mr. Smith (despite the views of competent authorities, temperance and official, in Gothenburg itself) alleges, then the responsibility must plainly appear in the

* In contrast to this we may point out that, although the law fixes the age limit for spirit sales at 15, the Company voluntarily refuses to serve anyone under 18 years of age.

Company's statistics of sales. As a matter of fact, those statistics point in quite the opposite direction. Instead of an increase, they show that the Company's sales of brannvin have actually declined by nearly one-half (44 per cent.). The figures can speak for themselves:—

Quinquennial period.	Average total sales of Brannvin. Litres per inhabitant.	Drunkenness. Per 1,000 inhabitants.
1882–86	15·05	29·6
1887–91	13·26	36·2
1892–96	10·50	36·0
1897–1901	11·99	49·0
1902–6	10·53	48·4
1907–11	8·46	47·0

That is to say, while the statistics of drunkenness have grown from 29·6 per 1,000 inhabitants to 47 per 1,000 inhabitants, the total brannvin sales of the Company, which Mr. Smith alleges is so largely responsible for the drunkenness of the city, have fallen from 15 litres to 8½ litres. The figures of 'on' sales are even more remarkable. They show a reduction, during the same period, of no less than 60 per cent., *i.e.*, from 6·84 litres per head in the five years, 1882–6, to 2·79 litres in the last five years.

Is it not a little remarkable that Mr. Smith, in his five columns of denunciation of the Gothenburg system as "a very drunken" and "corrupting" system, should never once refer to these figures of sales?

Topsy-turvey Criticism.

Mr. Smith suggests—more than once—that the statistics of drunkenness in Sweden, and even in Norway, are a source of embarrassment to advocates of the Gothenburg system of disinterested management. Why should they be? High statistics of drunkenness are not, as we have shown, peculiar to towns in which the Gothenburg system is in operation. They are found in persistent, and sometimes very aggravated, measure even in prohibition towns. What does perplex advocates of disinterested management is the amount of destructive zeal shown by active temperance workers like Mr. Smith in their efforts to discredit a system which has actually put into operation the drastic restrictions which temperance reformers in Great Britain desire ardently, but so far vainly, to secure. Why should such restrictions be desirable here and productive of drunkenness there? The Gothenburg system of disinterested management, as we have repeatedly pointed out, is not an abstraction; it is a concrete system of restrictive regulations which become effective because they are not opposed by private pecuniary interests. If the system, as alleged, breeds drunkenness, which of its rules or regulations or arrangements is responsible? Is it the rule which gives the managers of the Gothenburg Company's houses no financial interest in the sale of alcoholic liquors, but a direct interest in the sale of non-alcoholic drinks? Is it the rigid limitation of the number of drams allowed to be sold in the 'on' licensed premises, and the provision that no customer shall be served with spirits who does not at the same time order, and separately pay for, food of a stipulated value? Is it the severe restriction of licensed premises and the refusal of the Company to use 40 per cent. of the 'on' licences for which they are compelled to tender and upon which they are assessed for licence duty? Does it really make for drunkenness that there is to-day only one 'on' spirit licence in Gothenburg for every 4,469 inhabitants, as against one for every 1,221 inhabitants in 1868, when the Company first obtained possession of all the 'on' licences? Or is it the restriction of 'off' licences that is responsible? Is it the mark of a "very drunken" system that the Company voluntarily and resolutely refuses to use all of its 'off' spirit licences, and to-day has only the same number of 'off' licensed premises (seven) as it had some forty years ago when the population of the city was only one-third of the present population?

Or is it the abolition of sales on credit, or the refusal to allow women to be employed as bar tenders in the Company's public-houses, or the voluntary shortening of the legal hours of sale, or the prohibition of sales to young persons under the age of 18 (three years later than the limit fixed by law), or the reduction, by successive stages, of the alcoholic strength of the spirits sold (*i.e.*, from 47 per cent. of alcohol to 39 per cent.), that makes the Gothenburg system, in Mr. Smith's view, a "very drunken system?" So we might go on. There is, in fact, no limit to the pertinent questions which such loose allegations suggest.

A "Corrupting" System.

Mr. Smith, however, goes further. The Gothenburg system, he alleges, is not only a "very drunken" system, it is also a "corrupting" system. What are his proofs? He quotes, first of all, but without analysis or explanation, the aggregate gross takings, expenses and net profits of the Gothenburg Company for the years 1906–1910, and then he proceeds:—

"Of the gross takings, the expenses work out at about 30 per cent., and the net profits at 70 per cent. Now Sweden is a very poor country compared with England, and those who had the distribution of the liquor profits

—relatively a very large sum of money—became persons of importance and dispensers of favours and patronage with whom it was desirable to stand well. Favoritism, financial jugglery, and corruption got into the system from the earliest days, and in 1894-5 the Swedish Parliament ordered an official inquiry into the abuses and irregularities which had grown into grave scandals, and the result was an amending Act in May, 1895, correcting many abuses and diverting a considerably larger share of the profits from local purposes to the national exchequer."

It is difficult to treat such a series of statements seriously. The ignorance displayed is almost grotesque. We will, however, ask the writer one or two plain questions. In the first place, since he bases his allegations of 'favoritism, financial jugglery, and corruption" upon the Gothenburg figures, will he name a single responsible person in Sweden, whatever his view of the Gothenburg system may be, who has ever suggested that the Gothenburg Company is, or has been, guilty of "financial jugglery" or of "corruption?" He refers, in support of his allegations, to the official inquiry which preceded the legislation of 1895. Will he quote a single passage in the report of that inquiry which charges the Gothenburg Company with "financial jugglery" or "corruption?"

Secondly, what does he mean, and to whom is he referring, when he says, "Those who had the distribution of the liquor profits—relatively a very large sum of money—became persons of importance and dispensers of favours and patronage with whom it was desirable to stand well?" The context suggests that the persons referred to are the directors of the companies. Indeed, in a later paragraph, Mr. Smith makes this plain, for he there expressly refers to "liquor company directors" as persons who, "after feathering their own nests, became persons of great importance by this distribution of money in relief of rates and by the dispensing of charities, and the promoters of reading rooms, concerts, meals for poor children, and similar movements, including church building, the work of temperance societies and religious bodies."

We begin to wonder if Mr. Smith really knows the rudimentary facts of the Gothenburg system! Will he tell us when the directors of Swedish bolags (*i.e.*, disinterested management companies) had any part in the distribution of the profits? Is it, or is it not, a fact that, for something like forty years, the appropriation of the profits (*i.e.*, their division among specified public authorities) has been fixed by statute? Have the directors of the Gothenburg bolag, to take again the case quoted by Mr. Smith, had any voice in the distribution of the profits of their company since 1868?

Thirdly, Mr. Smith, in the same amazing paragraph, refers to the amending Act of 1895 as "diverting a considerably larger share of the profits from local purposes to the national exchequer"? Will he name any clause in the Act of 1895 which did this? We think we know who has deceived him, but the statement is quite inaccurate. The change referred to was not enacted till ten years later. We entirely approve of the change. As a matter of fact, some of us advocated it years before it was made, but it had no place in the legislation of 1895. It began to come into operation in 1907.

Apart from loose and misleading general statements, Mr. Smith's "evidence" of "corruption" consists of oft-quoted, but quite unconvincing, references to four small towns in Sweden where various so-called "irregularities" are alleged to have taken place. Suppose, since the instances quoted are quite unimportant, we grant him these. Do they justify a general charge of 'financial jugglery' and 'corruption' against a system? Are 'abuses' and 'irregularities' and scandalous evasions of law unknown in prohibition towns? Do they prove that prohibition is a 'corrupting system'?

A Prohibition Plebiscite.

Mr. Smith concludes his attack by a brief reference to the royal commission lately appointed in Sweden, to which we shall refer shortly, and a much longer, and more detailed reference to "the trend of opinion" which, he says, "is strongly running in favour of prohibition of the traffic in spirits"? "Many towns," he tells his readers, "have already, by popular vote, prohibited the 'disinterestedly' managed company system of liquor sale, and strong efforts are being made to include beer and wines therein, these drinks being relatively sparingly used." This sentence very much puzzles us. Where in Sweden are these 'many towns' that, by popular vote, have already prohibited the company system? Will Mr. Smith give us their names? And what does the reference to the "strong efforts" that "are being made to include beer and wines therein" mean? Does it mean—what of course is true—that there is a widespread feeling in favour of bringing beer and wine under the bolag system of disinterested management? If so, how does that fact support an allegation that the system is a "drunken" and "corrupting" system?

Mr. Smith lays much emphasis upon the interesting plebiscite on prohibition taken in Sweden in 1910. It might have been better

perhaps, if, in referring to it as a 'vote,' he had mentioned that it was an unofficial and non-effective vote on a general abstract proposition, organised and conducted by the temperance societies of Sweden. On the face of them the figures are striking, but, used as Mr. Smith tries to use them, as support for a foolish charge that the Gothenburg system is a 'drunken' and 'corrupting' system, they can only mislead. The official figures show that, at the time of the plebiscite (which included all males and females over 18 years of age), the total number of persons in Sweden above the age of 18 was 3,419,741, of whom 1,630,804 were males and 1,788,937 were females. The total number of votes cast for prohibition represented just over one-half (55 per cent.) of those included in the plebiscite. That is a fact which may well encourage prohibitionists. We for our part value it as a rough indication of a stream of opinion and feeling towards the alcohol problem which we would fain see overspreading the civilised world.

But what have the figures to do with Mr. Smith's allegations? In what way do they prove that the Gothenburg system is a "drunken" and "corrupting" system? The merits or demerits of the Gothenburg system were not put before the voters as an issue when the plebiscite was taken. They were not asked to choose between the Gothenburg system and prohibition. It was a non-effective plebiscite on the sole question of prohibition. Here is the supreme test: How many of those who voted for prohibition in 1910 would vote to-day or to-morrow in favour of the abolition of the Gothenburg system and for a return to the old system of private licensing? Is it, or is it not, a fact that, throughout Sweden, as throughout Norway, there is a universal opinion that, where a licensing system of some sort is required, the system of disinterested management is the best system? Why should this fact be so persistently ignored by certain British prohibitionists who are so active, and often so disingenuous, in their hostility to disinterested management? If prohibition on a universal scale were practicable here and now, there would be no need for anyone, certainly not for the Temperance Legislation League, to advocate disinterested management or any other licensing system. If British critics of disinterested management are to quote Swedish opinion at all, let them at least quote it fully and fairly. To quote (as support for attacks on the Gothenburg system) the results of prohibition plebiscites, and to give no hint of the fact that, failing prohibition, the people who voted for it prefer a system of disinterested management, is unjustifiably to mislead readers who are not familiar with the facts.

The best answer to Mr. Smith on this point is to remind our readers of the Manifesto of the National Temple of the Swedish Templar Order, at its recent annual meeting at Sundsvall. In this important declaration, referred to at length in a recent issue of Monthly Notes, the Swedish Templar Order, while looking to prohibition as the ultimate reform, expressly advocates disinterested management during the "transition period" and recommends its application to the sale of beer also!

The Royal Commission.

Mr. Smith—and this is our final word—makes a passing reference to the Swedish Royal Commission which is now investigating various aspects of the liquor and licensing problems, and which has lately been expressly charged with a mandate to give early attention to (*a*) the detention of inebriates and (*b*) the allocation of liquor revenue. Of the eleven members of the Commission, eight are avowed prohibitionists, and one other is, we believe, inclined to that remedy. What the report of the Commission will be no one at present can say. This much, however, is certain: it will not condemn the principle of disinterested management nor recommend the abandonment of the Gothenburg system. Strong prohibitionists as—by deliberate design of the Government—most of the members of the Commission are, every one of them, we believe, holds the view that, where alcoholic liquor is required to be sold at all, it should be sold under a system which excludes private profit. As one member of the Commission (who was lately quoted in an English prohibitionist journal as an opponent of disinterested management!) recently put it: "I have heard many blaming the Gothenburg system; I have never heard any one of any importance urge that it should be abandoned."

Attitude of the Swedish Parliament.

The Swedish Parliament has repeatedly shown the favourable view which it takes of the Gothenburg system, and, in connection with its most recent legislation on the question, it emphasised its appreciation of the value of the system in a striking way. The Act of 1905, which came into operation in 1907, included in its aims—in the words of the Riksdag—that of "placing the retail trade in spirits, to a larger extent than hitherto, in the hands of bolags [*i.e.*, disinterested management companies]." This aim was justified in an explanatory memorandum presented to the King by the Swedish Parliament, on the ground that "the interests of the public are much better served by the bolags than by other licensees."

Attitude of the Swedish Temperance Party.

The attitude of Swedish temperance reformers is equally clear. Indeed their position is practically identical with that held by the Temperance Legislation League. They look —as the League looks—to prohibition as the ultimate goal; but they see, as we see, the value of disinterested management as a step towards that goal. They are eager to hasten their march to the goal, but they are not willing to go back from the Gothenburg system to private licensing. The cardinal fact in the situation is that there, as here, advance to the final goal is hindered by the obdurate and difficult problem of the large town. The problem is much greater in Great Britain than in Sweden; but it exists there also. Its importance, too, is plainly recognised. The official organ of the Swedish Templar Order made this plain in a recent article: "Very many absolutists" [*i.e.*, prohibitionists] it stated, "consider that the bolag system has now played its part and should be done away with as quickly as possible. We do not see the matter so optimistically. There exists something which one might call the alcohol question of the larger towns,' and for the solution of this complicated problem one might have the invaluable services of a modern Gothenburg system." In the country districts and in the smaller towns, it added, "the local veto path might be that leading most quickly to the goal, but in the case of the larger towns we have to reckon with the fact that we may drag on with alcohol for a series of years." Therefore, argued this official organ of the Swedish Templar movement, "we ought to be able to come to an agreement on the point that, so long as spirits have to be sold in these communities, they should be sold in such a way as to do as little social harm as possible." The true policy to pursue was stated in a sentence: "Let us consequently introduce the true Gothenburg system everywhere where it is needed, but break it up in those places where it has played its part." The "relative value of the real [Gothenburg] system," it was asserted, "cannot be denied."

An explicit statement of this kind, by the official organ of the Swedish Templar Order, is a sufficient answer to the ill-informed criticisms and statements of certain extreme British opponents of the Gothenburg system.

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